

# RALLY COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

## California Restructures to Enrich Corporations, Abandoning Workers

California's lengthy struggle to pass a budget with devastating consequences for public and social services illustrates the changing role of the State, the apparatus by which one class rules over and imposes its will on another. Under the old industrial capitalism, the U.S. State, including California, provided a rudimentary safety net to partially provide for the education and health needs of workers needed in production.

Now, California, the nation's most populous state, like others across America, is deeply mired in debt from the national and global economic meltdowns, caused by the accelerating self-destruction of global capitalism.

As corporate profits decline, capitalism seeks to recapture profits by destroying the old social contract and privatizing essential public services. As a result, every system that directly affects the public is breaking down.

Even before the stock market crash of a year ago, California was suffering from shrinking public school finances in cities and suburbs, job losses due to plant closures, escalating homelessness, and one of the highest rates of medically uninsured and underinsured in the nation.

For decades the poorest have suffered the callous indifference of the State, nationally and in California, and are now bearing the worst brunt of the loss of public services. The most recent changes, however, are also having disastrous consequences for middle income and unionized workers.

As negotiated contracts are suspended, government workers from college professors to maintenance workers have been forced to take mandatory furloughs and pay cuts of nine to fourteen percent. Public schools serving 5.9 million students suffered a \$10 billion budget cut. Funds for public health have been sharply cut back, hurting seniors on fixed incomes and people with disabilities by eliminating dental, eye, and foot care for people on MediCal.

### MANUFACTURED BUDGET CRISIS

California's economy, once the 8th largest in the world, is being steered to the brink of bankruptcy. This financial train wreck did not have to happen but the rulers

have manipulated the budget crisis to hasten the process of destroying the old safety net and further advancing the domination of government by the corporations. The resources exist to resolve all the budget problems; instead of resolving the problems, both the Democrats and the Republicans have used the struggle over the budget to protect the interests of the wealthy at the expense of everyone else.

California's manufactured budget crisis is rooted in the successful campaigns of the real estate industry 30 years ago to secure their profits by putting a cap on property taxes. That was the infamous Proposition 13. In each new budget crisis since then, the capitalists have pushed through additional new measures that greatly favor big multinational corporations and the rich.

Business commentators note that not everyone is devastated by the budget's fine print, which includes tax breaks for large corporations, film companies that keep production in-state, buyers of new homes, and small businesses that hire new employees. Consequently, the largest corporations in the world can enrich themselves with limited or no tax liability in California despite the ever-deeper cuts to public services.

While California's elected officials and popular media describe this chaos as temporary – something that will end once the global financial system is back on its feet – California's crisis illustrates something much more permanent and profound. As computer-controlled electronics and robotics replaces human labor in production, fewer and fewer workers are needed to manufacture the world's supply of goods and services and manufacturing becomes less and less profitable.

As production with minimal or no labor becomes the norm, the economic laws of capitalism are breaking down. In the face of this, corporate capital seeks to hold on to its wealth and power by transforming society into a new form of private property.

### RESPONSE TO ECONOMIC CHANGE

In response to these fundamental changes in the economy, the U.S. State as a whole, including California, is being restructured step by step, in the service of corporate profits, to wipe out all barriers to private prop-

erty and to create the best possible conditions for capital accumulation.

The biggest corporations and the systems that support them, including the banks and financial institutions, are driven to find new ways to boost their profits as traditional profit channels shrink. That is why Wall Street financiers developed derivatives and other complex financial instruments that led to the global financial meltdown. California has been a rich playground for the manipulation by the financial institutions. Predatory lending, bubbles, and easy credit have led to the third highest foreclosure rate in the nation.

The capitalists are using their political control to shift resources from the poor and the middle income to further enrich the corporate powers. The tax cuts given by the California Legislature and the Governor to big corporations have dramatically increased the wealth of the wealthiest, while worsening the state's budget crisis.

Responsibility for society is being denied, turning government at all levels into an indifferent and unaccountable apparatus that has no more use or regard for democracy. What is emerging is a new form of fascism to protect private property in a new form, converting the State apparatus from a vehicle that provided some protection for the public into to a vehicle that boldly serves only private property and profits.

### DRIVE TO PRIVATIZE

The restructuring is taking the form of a drive to privatize public services so corpo-

rations can enrich themselves by controlling resources and providing services that were once public benefits. The message is: the State is not our brother's keeper. You only get what you can afford to purchase from a private, profit-making company.

Currently in California this process is marked by a relentless attack on public sector employees. Of California's nearly 15 million workers, three million are government or public sector workers. Almost 61 percent of government workers are represented by unions, compared to only 11.4 percent of workers in the private sector. While in the past the unions could protect their members from outright layoffs, now they are unable to blunt the assault on public employees and those they serve.

The result is the steadily growing polarization between wealth and poverty. The latest U.S. Census figures show the recession has widened the gap between low- and middle-income families and the rich who are moving rapidly to hoard and increase their wealth at the expense of the rest of us. This polarization is resulting in greater class stratification. California has a poverty rate of nearly 17% and an unemployment rate rising past 12%.

### SAFETY NET DESTROYED

The destruction of the old social contract is along class lines but it is not understood that way. A new class is emerging that is made up from all strata of society who are now being thrown away –former factory

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# Demands of Dispossessed Only Basis for Unity

The rapidly changing times demand that we in the League of Revolutionaries for a New America master the practice of summing up our discussions in order to use them as a foundation for moving our analysis on to the next stage of development. In order to assure that we are talking about the same things, we should spell out some of the terms we will be using. First, what is a General Line? It is not a program. A program is a statement of how you do something. A general line is a statement of what you do. A proposal for a general line is for the movement rather than something that is imposed on individual organizations. If revolutionary organizations agree to such a line, they carry it out in their own way.

In Europe, at the beginnings of the communist movement, that struggle was clearly between the worker and the capitalist. With the development of imperialism the main aspect of the struggle shifted to the front between exploiter and exploited countries. During the 1920s and 1930s the front shifted to the struggle for democracy and against the fascist dictatorships. All of this was the collision of classes but the form it took constantly changed, demanding new statements of general line.

We are again undergoing a change in the form of the struggle. The deepening de-

structive phase of the social revolution is moving the struggle past anti-imperialism and into a new area. New conditions call for a new general line for the movement. In order to contribute to the spelling out of that line we first need to have a firm grasp on the situation.

Without needlessly repeating what we

production within the wage-labor – value system polarizes society with unheard of wealth at one pole and unheard of poverty at the other. The antagonism is irresolvable within the system and the struggle moves from the economic level to the political, revolutionary level. This reality must guide any discussion on general line.

expression of international finance capital, and it stood against the Republicans, which were the expression of national finance capital. The point is the political right and left expressed definite sections of the capitalist class.

It is interesting to note that President Franklin Roosevelt once told one of his top aids that the Italian fascist dictator Benito Mussolini had a right wing fascist government where the corporations dominated the government, and added, "We need a Left wing fascist government where the government dominates the corporations." This is what "fight the right" means today, because no one is suggesting that the government can ever disengage from the corporations. Both the right and the left are fascist.

The question becomes – are there two economic centers of gravity in capitalism today? If the idea of right and left within the system does not hold water, the struggle then is between two hostile classes rather than between two groups within the ruling class.

We do not confuse the "right wing" ideological groupings with the stable fascist political groups that are based in the economy. Together they make up the fascist movement. In dealing with the Communist movement, the government carefully distinguished between the ideological "crazies" and the communist core that was attached to actual social and economic motion. We have to do the same thing. We are not going to get caught up the argument of the past period where the demonstrator is fighting the dog and the revolutionary is advising him to fight the policeman who controls the dog. As serious revolutionaries we must concentrate our fire at the fascist center of gravity while participating in the "battle for the streets."

There will be some who will point to such political fights as over health care as an example of contradiction within the ruling class. Although there are tactical differences within the ruling class, there is no strategic difference. What we are seeing in the struggle around health care is the ongoing polarization of American society. This polarization is the necessary prelude to class struggle.

Any examination of the economy will show that the slogan "fight the right" is a dangerous denial of the reality that there is no longer any meaningful struggle between polarities within classes, but a growing struggle between economic classes. That struggle is not fight the right. That implies supporting one section of the capitalist class against another. We are dealing with the beginning stages of revolution.

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The political center of gravity is shifting to that growing core of dispossessed workers who have the option of fighting or starving. Their jobs are gone forever. Fighting for their concrete demands means educating and fighting against a system rather than against an employer.

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have agreed upon we should summarize our understanding. We have entered the beginning, destructive stage of a vast social revolution brought on by the transfer of social production from electro mechanical to electronics. The outstanding feature of this stage is irresolvable overproduction. Automated

Even as the social democratic organizations denounce such an analysis, they are compelled to move toward some form of unity in order to influence the rapidly growing mass movement. Their first step is to propose a general line even as they deny the need for such a line. Ideas are being exchanged with the goal of uniting the "Left" around the general line of "fight the right."

This is a catchy slogan, but the real world demands that slogans are a summation of reality and before we can accept or reject such a slogan we have to determine if it reflects reality.

## REVOLUTION, NOT FIGHT THE RIGHT

First we have to define what is the right. There is a right because there is a left and vice versa. Therefore the right and left belong to the same body. The working class movement or the trade union movement is not the left. They contain a right and a left. The working class and the capitalists are mutually inter dependent, but they are mutually exclusive. So therefore when we speak of the right and the left we are referring to one or the other entities.

Secondly, is the right or left an ideological position or a political one? Any dictionary, any book on politics will state that politics expresses economics – clears the way for the economy or a section of the economy to develop. Thus the Democratic Party was the political expression of the agrarian bourgeoisie and the rising industrial class had to create a new party, the Republican Party to represent its interests. Or in later times, the Roosevelt Coalition, which dominated the Party, was the political

## EDITORIAL POLICY

**Rally:** to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack]

**Comrade:** a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

*Rally, Comrades!* is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity to the conscious revolutionaries, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages.

It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League to engage them in debate and discussion and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

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## UNITY ON A NEW FOUNDATION

While we must always try to learn from other countries, we must be constantly aware that the forms and specifics of the revolutionary movement in the U.S. will conform to American history. Revolutionaries instinctively reject any reference to American exceptionalism as an attack on science. The reality is that classes were clearly defined in Europe. This is not true of the United States. The mobility between classes that is a part of American life is almost unknown in Europe. For example, the billionaire who created the sub-prime mortgage scheme was the son of a butcher and

the billionaire who developed the idea of packaging toxic assets with prime investments once worked at a fast food restaurant. This means we are going to go through a period of mass struggle before the class features become clear. Any discussion on general line has to take this reality into consideration.

The qualitatively new situation demands that the general line today is that the revolutionary movement should center upon the support and struggle for the concrete demands of the growing mass of dispossessed. Under previous conditions the political center of gravity shifted from the skilled craftsmen and trades to the growing new mass of

industrial workers. The American Federation of Labor could not understand the significance of that shift and therefore began its decline. Today, the political center of gravity is shifting from the industrial workers, who, under attack from electronics and globalization, find themselves almost helpless, to that growing core of dispossessed workers who have the option of fighting or starving. This is crucial since they cannot win their demands within the system. Everything depends on them getting their jobs back. Those jobs are gone forever. So fighting for their concrete demands means educating and fighting against a system rather than against an employer.

How is such a general line implemented? First by understanding that the line of march of the revolution is basically from economic to political struggles. Concretely this means from demands against an employer to demands against the state. The bourgeoisie itself has and will give us the necessary openings to this fight. As revolutionaries, we have to train ourselves to recognize when the door is open.

*Political Report of the Standing Committee of League of Revolutionaries for a New America, September 2009.*

# Editorial: Embrace Change, Envision the Future

*It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.*

— Charles Darwin

Only a few generations have lived through the kind of profound and monumental change that is upon us today.

Throughout human history, societies have undergone destruction and transformation as new tools were created and introduced, new classes fought for control as society reorganized around those new tools, and battles raged over whose vision of the new society would win out.

It was not necessarily the smartest or the "fittest" who emerged victorious. Those who understood that change was afoot, grabbed it with both hands, and shaped it in their interests. In the past, conditions ensured that victory almost always went to a handful of exploiters. Today, conditions permit that victory belongs to those who are fighting for the demands of the growing mass of dispossessed. This is the path to raise up all of society in the interests of all.

In such times of transition, human understanding and clarity have always been the decisive factor. Understanding the roots of our problems, assessing the battleground and alignment of forces, and having a vision of where we are trying to go is central to achieving the goals we seek. This is what *Rally, Comrades!* is committed to.

Past issues of *Rally, Comrades!* have examined society's general economic and political motion and the resulting restructuring of the State. Our article on the California budget crisis, *California Restructures to Enrich Corporations, Abandoning Workers* brings this process into stark relief. Destroying the old safety net, privatizing public services, and using control over taxes and spending to shift ever-greater wealth to the corporations, California exposes the real

political relations in this country. The budget crisis is not the result of insufficient resources, but reflects political control of those resources by the capitalist class to the exclusion of the interests of the rest of us.

In California, as well as around the country and the world, people are beginning to question, to protest, and attempt to organize in defiance of the capitalists' agenda. Thousands in California, from teachers to nurses to high school students, have protested California's fate. In late October, thousands marched in Chicago to demand that the banks be held responsible for what they have done to our families and homes.

Tens of thousands will gather in Detroit next year for the U.S. Social Forum. The article, *The U.S. Social Forum on the Road to Detroit*, examines the economic and social struggles developing today in the United States as part of the emerging objectively revolutionary process. Many of those struggles will be represented in the Social Forum process, and thousands of those participating will be searching for answers to questions about the road ahead.

But what path should the myriad of coalescing forces take? How to decide? How to proceed? The article, *Demands of the Dispossessed the Only Basis of Unity*, examines this question. The call to "fight the right" is widely disseminated, but this view does not recognize that conditions have changed and that we no longer face a struggle within classes, but one between classes. Fight the right implies supporting one section of the capitalist class against another. Today, we are dealing with the beginning stages of revolution.

Our approach must change accordingly. The center of political gravity has shifted. Revolutionaries must hold to that social force that has no choice but to demand and fight for its survival or starve. Fighting for these concrete demands means educating and fighting against a system instead of an

employer. In the process, revolutionaries work to disseminate an understanding of the problems we face, a vision of what's possible, and an assessment and strategy of how to get there.

In such times as ours, when all of society is pulled into the vortex of destruction and change, the struggle to understand the world is a prelude to changing it. The article, *Darwin at 200: The Man, the Theory, the Times*, shows that the scientist Charles Darwin, like us, lived in a time of great transition, the period from a world based on agriculture to one based on industry. His theory not only introduced a new way of

looking at evolution, but also, unlocked the human mind with a new conception of how change occurs. In this, he contributed not only to human knowledge in the natural sciences, but also, was part of a great intellectual leap that helped society progress to a new stage of development.

Today, we stand on the cusp of a new epoch in human history. As terrible as it is, and will become, the destruction we see all around us is the prelude to transformation. The whole of human history shows those who grasp this one truth will be those who emerge victorious.

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# The U.S. Social Forum on the Road to Detroit

Twenty thousand movement organizers and activists from diverse organizations and fronts of struggle across the United States, Canada, and the world are expected to converge at the second United States Social Forum (USSF) in Detroit, Michigan, from June 22 to June 26, 2010.

A virtual “ground zero” for the global economic meltdown and social destruction wreaking havoc throughout our communities, Detroit and Michigan are today a battleground around concrete political questions about whom the U.S. government is going to serve. The questions of whether people are going to have housing, water, and schools, and of nationalization of auto and health care, are immediate and real there.

Just like the people of Detroit, Michigan, and the whole United States, participants in the U.S. Social Forum are going to be grappling with the question, “which way forward?” Can we address the needs of those who no longer have a place in the economic system without also taking on the struggle against corporate power and control in society, and for a government that acts in the interest of its people?

The U.S. Social Forum presents the revolutionaries involved in it with a “teachable moment,” an opportunity to grapple with what it will take to coalesce the scattered

struggles represented there along that crucial political edge.

## SOME SOCIAL FORUM HISTORY

The beginning of the Social Forum process and the first World Social Forum (WSF) in 2001 were preceded by a number

to protest the convocation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1999. The call for the first WSF went out to fighters who were protesting global capitalism to gather in January 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and present an alternative to the corporate and political representatives of capital meeting at the same time in Davos,

ic and social crisis and growing political instability. The addition of “A New Detroit is Underway” to this year’s slogans points toward the developing social motion and political awakening that is beginning in Detroit and the Rust Belt, and the choices facing workers across the United States.

The economic and social struggles developing today in the United States are part of an emerging, objectively revolutionary process. Many of those struggles will be represented in the Social Forum process, and thousands of those participating will be searching for answers to questions about the road ahead. Armed with an understanding of history and the class forces in conflict today, these emerging revolutionaries can become part of an independent political force that is conscious of its class interests and has the capacity to act on these interests to construct a new cooperative and egalitarian society.

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## THIS HISTORIC MOMENT

of struggles that threatened “business as usual” for the international meetings of the managers of international capitalism. Among the most noted were the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 and the Battle in Seattle

Switzerland at the World Economic Forum.

The slogan of the World Social Forum, “Another world is possible,” reflects the attempts of its participants, not only to protest global capitalism – its exploitation, its oppression, its wars, its destruction of society and nature, and its neoliberal policies – but also to envision an alternative future. Activists and organizations from continents around the world responded to the call. From its convening in 2001 to 2009, the WSF has been held in Latin America, Asia, and Africa and has grown from 15,000 to well over 100,000 participants at its gathering in Belem, Brazil.

The WSF International Council asked grassroots activists and organizers in the United States to bring the Social Forum to the United States. The first USSF was organized in Atlanta, Georgia in the summer of 2007. Several years of education and organizing insured that organizations of low-income workers representing the cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity of the U.S. working class were at the table and, most importantly, in the leadership of the process.

Fifteen thousand participants from 1,000 organizations, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam, and internationally from 68 countries were present. The slogan of the U.S. Social Forum, “Another world is possible; Another U.S. is necessary,” reflects the understanding that reconstructing the world to meet human needs isn’t possible without a vision of and fight for a fundamentally different United States, given the strategic place the United States occupies in the global political economy.

The second USSF will be held in Detroit under new conditions of deepening econom-

The late 20th century and early 21st century have seen major structural shifts in the global capitalist economy, the rise of neoliberal policies, increasing war, and ecological destruction. The content of the economic revolution is the reorganization of the economy around the new electronic tools and technology that are labor-replacing, thus driving millions of workers in the United States and globally into permanent unemployment and low-wage contingent jobs. This leap in the economy is the basis for the soaring poverty, dispossession, and social destruction throughout the world.

During the same decades, the global political environment has shifted as the Cold War ended. In this context, the World Social Forum process was seen by anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist activists and organizations as a place where they could gather, dialogue, network, and strategize.

The work of these activists and organizations over the last several decades has been grounded in objective struggles for basic necessities – food, water, housing, health care, education, jobs and wages, clean air, and more – and to be free from police violence and state terror. These struggles, defensive rather than offensive, are in response to the rollback of the reforms of the 20th century as the capitalist economic system contracts and moves toward crisis.

Today’s ongoing practical struggles confront the deepening economic crisis of global capitalism, polarization of absolute wealth and poverty, and the growing section of society that is unemployed, poor, and dispossessed. The economic disruption in society and the inability of millions of people to secure the essentials of life are forcing them, their organizations, and movements into a political struggle against the capitalist state

## You Need *Rally, Comrades!* *Rally, Comrades!* Needs You

The world is in the midst of rapid change. You or those close to you might have been threatened with or suffered loss of job and home. You are deeply concerned about what’s happening to our world.

You read, listen to the radio, and watch TV to understand what’s happening, but the answers aren’t there. There’s plenty of news and analysis, but all of it comes to describing problems and proposals for fixing capitalism. None of it points the way to a new society.

*Rally, Comrades!* stands out, offering a sound and clear analysis of the way forward. *Rally, Comrades!* shows how capitalism is coming to an end. It clearly describes the emerging struggle over what will replace capitalism: a new form of private property enforced through fascism, or a new communal society for the well being of all peoples.

Human society is at a critical juncture in history where what people understand and what people choose to do will determine the fate of future generations.

*Rally, Comrades!* and the League receive no donations from corporations, foundations or government. We rely completely on volunteers and donations from readers like you to carry out this urgent work.

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that bails out Wall Street and the corporations, but not the people.

### THE USSF AND TASKS OF REVOLUTIONARIES

A perspective of a section of those participating in the U.S. Social Forum is that neoliberal policies can be rolled back, Keynesianism and the welfare state can be restored, and capitalism can be reformed. For

others the answer is the abolition of global capitalism in all its forms and a transformative process for construction of a socialist economy and society on the path to communism.

As the crisis of capitalism intensifies, more and more people begin to see that the fight ahead of us in this period is different than that in earlier periods in the United States and globally. Increasing political instability and polarization, and the growing

fight of those dispossessed by capitalism presents an opportunity to propagandize, agitate, and educate so that the scattered mass struggles can be transformed into a class struggle for political power. That is going to require that revolutionaries deepen class-consciousness, the vision of communism, and political strategy for the path to power.

Concrete struggles for human needs are the vehicle that can change society if people are armed with the understanding that the

crisis of global capitalism is systemic; that revolution is the historic project of our times; and that communism, a cooperative society based in the abundance that electronic-based production makes possible, is the next stage of human history.

For more information on the USSF, visit their web page at [www.ussf2010.org](http://www.ussf2010.org)

# Darwin at 200: The Man, the Theory, the Times

February 12, 2009 marked the 200th birthday of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication of his monumental work, *On the Origin of Species*. These milestones were celebrated throughout the world in recognition of the profound impact of Darwin and Darwinian evolutionary theory. Both the man and his theory are objects of widespread praise and in-depth analysis. However, the man is usually treated as a timeless icon, and he and his theory of evolution are isolated from the historical context and process they reflect.

Indeed, Darwin's contributions to human knowledge are often simply summed up as "survival of the fittest" and "humans developed from apes." What is missing is the appreciation that the fundamental contribution of Darwinian evolutionary theory was not the actual fact of evolution, but the introduction of a new way of thinking about it. Darwin gave biology a history and a mechanism for change.

### EXPLAINING CHANGE

Darwin and Darwinian evolutionary theory were the culmination of a process fueled by the rapid advances in the natural and biological sciences during the 18th and 19th centuries. These advances reflected, in part, the growing application of technology to agricultural and industrial production. For example, in 1759, the Duke of Bridgewater had an eleven-mile canal cut between his Worsley mines and Manchester. The completion of the canal reduced transportation costs, and the price of coal in Manchester dropped by 50 percent. There was an ensuing explosion of canal building. 81 canals were dug between 1790 and 1794, which required the employment of geologists and surveyors.

While the developing canal system opened up the interior of England to commercial trade, it also revealed that the earth was composed of layers or strata that changed over time, indicating that the earth had a clear history. The vision of an evolu-

tioning earth was concretized by the publication in 1830 of the *Principles of Geology* by Charles Lyell, one year before Darwin began his voyage on the H.M.S. Beagle.

During his five-year adventure on the H.M.S. Beagle Darwin would amass the data on the geographical distribution and interrelationships between animals and plants which would form the foundation of Darwinian evolutionary theory. The analysis of this data was made possible by changes in

biology concretized by his grandson.

A different explanation of biological evolution was the "Theory of Inherited Characteristics" proposed by Jean Baptiste de Lamarck in 1809. In this approach, the physical characteristics of an animal could be changed by the animal itself in an effort to better adapt to its environment, and these changes could then be passed on to its descendants. To Lamarck biological evolution was a goal-directed or teleological process

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With the publication of *On the Origin of Species* materialism replaced metaphysics and idealism as the fundamental basis of the understanding of natural science. Darwinian evolution was a unifying theory of life that incorporated natural and physical sciences and revolutionary change into the human understanding of nature.

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tioning biological sciences during the 17th and 18th centuries.

In this period, plants and animals were catalogued and classified. The resulting concepts of species, genera and families revealed that the living organisms were different but yet interconnected, and that species had histories which included changing, or evolving, over time. The observations that, like the earth, living organisms changed over time gave rise to a number of evolutionary theories to explain them.

Between 1784 and 1802, Erasmus Darwin (Charles Darwin's grandfather) proposed one approach to evolution by asking "Are living creatures descended from a single common ancestor?" and "How are species transformed?" and an answer, "Competition and selection." Erasmus Darwin essentially framed the key principles of the evolutionary theory that would

in which, as the historian Thomas Kuhn observed, "The 'idea' of man and of the contemporary flora and fauna was thought to have been present from the first creation of life, perhaps in the mind of God. That idea or plan had provided the direction and the guiding force to the entire evolutionary process."

Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory abolished the teleological theories and replaced them with one containing two interconnected processes. One is a slow, steady accumulation of undirected haphazard changes (mutations) in an organism, producing a new organism with increased complexity and capabilities. The second is the interaction of the new mutated organism with the environment and its ability to survive and reproduce in relationship to the non-mutated organisms. The process was called "natural selection," and the mecha-

nism responsible for the changes was "the struggle for existence."

With the publication of *On the Origin of Species* materialism replaced metaphysics and idealism as the fundamental basis of the understanding of natural science. Darwinian evolution was a unifying theory of life that incorporated natural and physical sciences and revolutionary change into the human understanding of nature. In addition, by bringing historical change into biological science, by providing a materialist approach to evolution, and by giving this process direction, i.e. from less to more complex, Darwin ignited an explosion in the biological sciences.

### MAN OF HIS TIMES

It is tempting to view Darwin as a solitary genius working in isolation and to consider only his impact on society and not society's impact on Darwin. However, at the same time that Darwin was developing his evolutionary theory, Alfred Russell Wallace independently conceived the same basic explanation of natural selection.

In 1856, Darwin and Wallace presented joint papers at the Linnaean Society, and 15 months later Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*. Both had done extensive field work on the distribution of animal species, Darwin in the Galapagos Islands and Wallace in the Malay Archipelago. Both attributed the source of their evolutionary theory to the reading of "An Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society" written by Thomas Malthus in 1798. In the Introduction to the *On the Origin of Species* Darwin writes that his theory of evolution is "The doctrine of Malthus applied to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms."

Malthus was writing during the consolidation of the Industrial Revolution in England, and his observations reflected the growing impoverishment of the working classes and the enrichment of the capitalist class. According to his theory, populations tend to increase geometrically unless con-

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strained by famine, disease and death. Malthus coined the phrase "the struggle for existence" to describe an ever present fact of life in which those who grow rich are the fittest and win the struggle, and, conversely, the poor who, according to him, are doomed by nature to fail.

Darwin belonged to the rentier class, that section of the upper middle class that were considered among the "fittest." He was born in 1809 and grew up during the consolidation of the power of the industrial capitalists, a process reflected by the history of the Corn Laws. The Corn Laws were passed in 1815 and banned all wheat imports when the price fell below a set price. Therefore they were tariffs protecting the agricultural sector of the economy. The laws also hindered free trade. They were repealed in 1846 and indicated that industry was the ruling sector of the capitalists and free trade was the rule.

The repeal had a positive effect on British manufacturing. For example, the export of Lancashire cottons rose from £141,000 in 1843 to £1,000,000 in 1854. This was related to the final victory of steam

(ocean steamers and the railroad) over all other means of transport, and transport became four times faster and four times cheaper. British manufacturing based upon steam overwhelmed foreign domestic industries based upon manual labor. "Times were good

contributions must be understood within the context of the society he lived in and to which he contributed. In the words of Ashley Montagu, "In an age characterized by industrial competition in which no quarter was given, Darwin gave an explanation vir-

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Examining Darwin's evolutionary theory within the context of the time in which he lived allows us to see how the change in the ways humans produced their means of existence affected not only political relationships, but the analysis of the natural world as well.

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for the British capitalists" the historian A.L. Morton wrote in *A People's History of England*, and they regarded their good fortune as a law of nature and expected it to last for ever.

Darwin's philosophical and scientific

usually entirely in terms of competition, in terms of the struggle for life or existence."

Examining Darwinian evolutionary theory in this light allows us to see how the change in the ways humans produced their means of existence affected not only politi-

cal relationships, but the analysis of the natural world as well. We can see how the growth of the natural and physical sciences and, in particular, Darwinian evolutionary theory, was used to affect the structure and defense of the developing political relationships. Thus, it is important to examine Darwinian evolutionary theory in the context of the inter-relationships between scientific advances, the resulting changes in production and the transformations in social and political relationships, and to determine what Darwin got right and what he got wrong. This will be the topic of a future essay.

### Further Reading

Charles Darwin, *On the Origins of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, John Murray, 1859.

R.E. Leakey and R. Lewin, *Origins*, E.P. Dutton, 1977

A.L. Morton, *A People's History of England*, International Publishers, 1974

A. Montagu, *Darwin, Competition and Cooperation*, Henry Schuman, 1952

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workers, laid off service workers, and part-time and contract workers, the homeless, and now government workers who have had good pensions and costly health care packages. The destruction of the social safety net has once comfortable suburbs looking like violence ridden and jobless inner cities. The discontent of the "Walmart poor" can almost be touched, but the discontent lacks class identification and direction.

Countless ideologues help the corporations by deflecting discussion from the real solutions to society's problems, limiting the focus exclusively to market driven and for-profit proposals. This is especially evident in the discussion over health care in America where the only proposals seriously considered are based on the for-profit insurance, medical and drug industries, while the only real solution to providing health care for everyone is to eliminate profit-making and ensure all health care is public and universal. This is not the old fight against the right as the left sees it, but rather a fight to make what's private, publicly owned and run.

### BATTLE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS

Although some people still look to the

Democrats to solve problems, California Democrats, the majority party in the state legislature, can't and won't bring back the social safety net. Both parties serve the interests of capitalists who no longer need a

only private property and profits, and abandons even the rudimentary safety net it once provided and any claim to the public good. Horse-trading with the hopes that one or another political party will rescue us is over.

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As the capitalists and their political allies push to solidify their class rule in California in support of private property and profits, Californians are gradually awakening to the fact that their futures are being destroyed. There is a simmering anger as they see more lives thrown away in service to corporations that ultimately have no use for them.

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social safety net designed to keep workers healthy enough to perform their work under the industrial capitalism system that is rapidly disappearing.

Both Democrats and Republicans share responsibility for the current crisis. Both are helping to defeat democracy by transforming the State into an apparatus that serves

Another social motion is developing in response to this changing economic landscape, but it remains scattered and not yet as effective as the circumstances require. As capitalists and their political allies push to solidify government support for class rule in support of private property and profits in a transforming economy, we are seeing the

gradual awakening of Californians to the fact that their futures are being destroyed.

Across the state people are demonstrating against the failures of the system. In late September employees throughout the 220,000-student University of California system staged a one-day strike against the effects of unprecedented budget cuts, including a 33% hike in tuition. Marches and demonstrations over immediate essential needs are growing, such as, the recent action in the Bay area by immigrant workers fighting to stop water terminations on tenants in foreclosed properties. There is a simmering anger as people see more lives thrown away in service to corporations that ultimately have no use for them.

The battle of our time is for the power to establish new priorities and policies, to liberate humanity, and to heal our planet in the interests of the growing dispossessed. That battle requires revolutionaries to enter the numerous struggles with an understanding that to be successful in fighting to secure our needs for healthcare, housing, education, economic security, peace, safety, and justice means teaching about and fighting for class rights and independence. In order to thrive we need a new vision and plan to produce a revolutionary reconstruction of society that benefits all humanity.